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Thesis

THE INFLUENCE OF GOTHIC ROMANCE

ON THE

FANTASTIC TALES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

Submitted by

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Outline

The Influence of Gothic Romance on the Fantastic Tales of Edgar Allan Poe

Part I

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Preface

The Gothic novel is the tale of terror that originated in England in the eighteenth century after a fashion set by Horace Walpole in his Castle of Otranto. Walpole's novel introduced three elements which became the common property of the Gothic novel throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; namely, the Gothic castle with its mediaeval machinery; the accompanying weather; and the Byronic hero. Succeeding Gothic writers developed these themes, emphasizing always the atmosphere of ruin and desolation, the presence of terrors, real or supernatural, and various devices to intensify horror.

The Gothic novel left its influence on the Victorian novel, on the English and American short story, and on German romance. Through his wide reading Poe became indebted to this literature for the Gothicism of his own tales. The fact that Poe knew the novels of the Gothic writers is attested to by several critics. The influence of these novels we see in his themes, settings, characters, treatment of the supernatural, devices for intensifying horror, and general atmosphere of desolation and terror.

His acquaintance with the sensational novels of his own day is revealed in his letters and criticisms,

and he was an omnivorous reader of the short stories of terror that were popular in the English and American periodical of the age. These tales, inferior and sentimental for the most part, inspired him to write in similar vein but with more artistry.

German romance he knew through the English reviews if not in the original. Most critics, English, French, and German, believe he was influenced by Hoffmann's romance, and Professor Cobb and E. C. Stedman prove this influence in convincing fashion in certain specific instances. Since there are striking parallels in the stories mentioned by these critics and since Poe had a habit of borrowing literary materials that he found at hand, the evidence of an influence seems unmistakable.

However, in none of these instances is Poe a mere imitator, for his own genius transformed whatever he borrowed. His art is more self-conscious than that of the earlier writers, his psychology is deeper, and he achieves a beauty and power that mark him as a true artist.

The Influence of Gothic Romance on the Fantastic Tales of Edgar Allan Poe

Explanation and Origin of the Gothic Novel

The Gothic novel may be defined as "the eighteenth century novel of terror dealing with mediaeval materials." The reaction to the realism of the early eighteenth century novel was introduced by a type of romance dealing with elements new to fiction--the weird elements of a supernatural world that had up to this time found their way into literature through the drama, poetry, the mediaeval romances of chivalry, and the folk tale, but not to any extent in the novel.

With Horace Walpole, whose Castle of Otranto was published in 1764, begins the true Gothic novel--a type of romance that became fashionable with the writers of his own century, which left its indelible imprint on the nineteenth century romanticists, and which shows some traces of its influence on the writers of present day literature.

The Castle of Otranto was the result of a dream which came to Walpole whose mind was absorbed in thoughts of Gothic structures. His immediate inspira-

tion was found in the "Gothic Castle" which he had had built for himself at Strawberry Hill, the gloomy atmosphere of which suggested a ghost-haunted novel with its terrors of the supernatural. "In the evening I sat down and began to write," he says, "without knowing in the least what I intended to say."[1] But he started a fashion. And to him are due three elements which became common to the literature of Gothicism throughout the latter part of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries: 1. the Gothic castle with its mediaeval "machinery"; 2. the importance of the weather as an accompaniment to character and incident (moonlight, storms, and gusts of wind); and 3. the Byronic hero.[2]

The novels of Clara Reeve, Mrs. Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Charles Brockden Brown, and other eighteenth century writers who followed the fad set by Walpole are influenced by these elements which they develop in elaborate fashion, as are the nineteenth century descendants of the Gothic romance--the tales of Walter Scott; Bulwer-Lytton, and Charles Robert Maturin who renovated the Gothic story after it had fallen into disrepute.

(1) Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, Preface, p.XVII (See Bibliography for full information)

(2) Ibid. Preface, p.XIX, XX

Characteristics of the Gothic Novel.

Setting

The Gothic novel as it was developed by the eighteenth century writers made use of a typical stage setting with its accompanying properties, the relationship between these and the supernatural effect being extremely close. The setting is the "Gothic" building--castle, abbey, or monastery with its subterranean vaults and dungeons, its trap doors, its creaking, rusty hinges, and keys groaning in the locks, its mouldy chapel--all making a suitable stage for the spectres that haunt it and for the "harassed heroine" who "is forever wandering through midnight corridors of Gothic structure." (1) The importance of the Gothic building itself can hardly be over emphasized, for upon it and its properties and staff and the motives based upon these depends the whole spirit of Gothic romance.(2)

About this Gothic structure is an atmosphere of ruin. The windows are broken or admit only "solemn twilight", ivy sprouts from its ramparts or covers its walls, weeds and tall grass "sigh in the wind over the

(1) Scarborough, The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction, p.9

(2) Eino Railo, The Haunted Castle, p.7

surrounding desolation" and a "melancholy silence" broods over the scene.[1] Within are winding passages leading to gloomy dungeons, hidden secret doors, tunnels that terminate in hidden caves, and rooms hung with aged tapestry which waves to and fro in response to the ever present gusts of wind. The heroine of The Romance of the Castle says: "When I entered the portals of this Gothic structure, a chill--surely prophetic--chilled my veins, pressed upon my heart, and scarcely allowed me to breathe." [2] Conspicuous among the properties are portraits, hangings frequently of black velvet, the castle bell or the castle clock,[3] musical instruments, miniatures, old manuscripts and letters.[4]

The scenery is chosen to suit this Gothic structure. Gloomy landscapes were the fashion set by Mrs. Radcliffe--"awesome mountains and forests, beetling crags and dizzy abysses." [5] The "wild wood walks that skirted the mountain" and the "mountain's stupendous recesses, where the silence and grandeur of solitude impressed a sacred awe upon her heart" pleased Emily of The Mysteries of Udolpho

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.9, 10

(2) Quoted from Scarborough (op.cit.) p.9

(3) Railo (op.cit.) p.11

(4) Ibid. pp.53, 54, 55

(5) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.11

more than "the soft and glowing landscape." [1] These scenes were not important for themselves but were treated subjectively to emphasize the mood of a character or, by creating an impression of awe and mystery, to suggest a setting suitable for suffering or crime or for ghastly deeds of horror.[2]

The weather also is treated subjectively to emphasize the mood of a character or the type of deed. There are frequent storms with thunder and lightning--generally at midnight and often an indication of mental stress.[3] The wind sweeping through the vaults extinguishes lights and whines in the night with a ghostly wail.

Although writers of the Gothic novel do not show the power of Shakespeare in his subjective use of weather to suggest tragedy of the soul, nevertheless in their attempt "to use the terrible forces of nature to reflect the dark passions of man" they increase the general impression of the supernatural for which they were striving.[4]

Characters

The hero of the Gothic novel is romantic, brave, and "refined". He is frequently a gloomy character of Byronic

(1) Mrs. Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, p.8

(2) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.11

(3) Ibid. p.12

(4) Ibid. p.13

type who likes to wander among romantic mountains, preferring scenes of sublimity to more peaceful ones and "often loses himself in awful solitudes." (1)

The heroine is characterized by "soft and pensive melancholy"; she frequently swoons and weeps or otherwise occupies herself with her drawing, embroidery, or music. Her curiosity is ever present and she wanders at midnight through the castle, opening secret doors and chests and hunting for letters and hidden manuscripts.(2)

The romantic villain, the creation of Mrs. Radcliffe,(3) stalks through all her romances and is further developed in the novels of her followers.

There is a revival from earlier literature of ghosts, witches, devils, and their allies. These supernatural characters frequently haunt the pages of Gothic fiction and are there given a new importance. They may be real or merely the apparitions that result from a guilty conscience. There are spectres of various kinds, some with a definite abode, others of a migratory nature who come to seek justice or revenge, or to give secret information. In later fiction these ghostly spirits become invisible although their presence is felt and their voices

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.39

(2) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.46

(3) Birkhead, The Tale of Terror, p.53

may be heard. There are witches--women with "demoniac power of enchantment" and hags who concoct magic potions and work all manner of mischief.[1]

The devil in the Gothic novel is not the awe inspiring figure that is created by Dante and Milton, but he is, nevertheless, an interesting demon. He may appear in disguise as an attractive young man, a Moorish servant, or an old man with supernatural powers, the guise he takes in Vathek,[2] a Gothic tale of Oriental splendor.

Other Gothic Effects

Inanimate objects have a supernatural power of their own: armor, portraits, statues, enchanted mirrors, wands, and crystal balls reveal by their strange behavior their ghostly attributes.[3]

The treatment of science is these novels is based upon the superstitions of an unscientific age. Many deal with alchemy, sorcery, hypnotism, ventriloquism and similar pseudo-scientific themes. This phase of Gothicism had a peculiar interest for the German writers who followed the Gothic cult, and was highly developed in the work of Tieck, Arnim, and Hoffmann.[4]

(1) Scarborough (op.cit.) pp.18-26

(2) Ibid. p.27-29

(3) Ibid. pp.31, 32

(4) Ibid. p.59

The use of insanity is frequent to increase supernatural effect and often seems "a special curse of the gods or torment from the devil." [1] The victims of madness in the novels of Lewis and Maturin were really mad, while later descendants, several of whom were introduced by Scott, were more inclined to a gentle insanity.[2] This theme also fascinated Charles Brockden Brown.

Especially characteristic is the use of portents to fortell a calamity. A lamp burns with a blue flame to indicate the approach of a supernatural being,[3] and a mysterious strain of music often precedes disaster.[4]

Among the birds that add to the gloom of the Gothic atmosphere we find the screech owl most prominent. Rooks and other birds of night clap their wings in the deserted abbeys of these novels, and bats flit about in the twilight.

The general effect of gloom is emphasized by the presence of vaults, skulls, and skeletons, while the effect of mystery is increased by such devices as the black veil popular with Mrs. Radcliffe, long lost manu-

(1) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.37

(2) Railo (op.cit.) p.309

(3) Ibid. p.55

(4) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.41

scripts, mysterious groans and wails, and music from some unseen source--the latter motive being so common "that it acquires the monotony of a tantalizing refrain". Lights appear and disappear, and doors open and close for no explicable reason.(1)

The theme of gigantism--or the enormous size of supernatural phenomena--is a frequent one(2) and a favorite with Walpole who describes a colossal helmet with waving plumes and the "form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude".

Another favorite motive is that of the "evil eye". When Vathek was angry, "one of his eyes became so terrible that no person could bear to behold it, and the wretch upon whom it was fixed instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired." Lewis and Maturin use this theme constantly.

But it was the new importance they gave to scenes of terror, making them frequently the center of interest, and their aim to produce the sensation of horror by means of every device in their power that set the Gothic novelists apart from the romanticists in general.

(1) Scarborough (op.cit.) pp.43-46

(2) Ibid. p.36

Prevalence of Gothicism in Nineteenth Century Literature

The Novel

The literature of the nineteenth century which Poe was reading is permeated with elements of Gothicism. From the time of Mrs. Radcliffe down to 1850 there was hardly a novelist who did not try to frighten his readers by his tales of horror or by his use of the supernatural. The novel and the short story of England and America and the romances of Germany were filled with Gothic elements.

Byron and Scott continued the rationalizing process begun by Mrs. Radcliffe in her "explained supernatural". The typical hero of Byron's works is directly descended from the villain of the earlier terror novels.(1) In fact, the "Byronic villain-hero, if not Byron himself, is Mrs. Radcliffe's work." (2)

Scott made use frequently of Gothic effects. He studied Mrs. Radcliffe's romances and in his memoirs of this author analyzed her use of the terror motive and

(1) Phillips--Dickens, Reade and Collins, Sensation Novelists, p.8

(2) Saintsbury--The English Novel, p.161

sought to produce similar effects in many of his own novels.[1] In Guy Mannering he has employed so many Gothic devices that one critic says this novel "might be styled a Gothic novel as written by a man of sense."[2]

Dickens and his followers of the nineteenth century are direct descendants through Byron and Scott of Walpole and the other Gothic novelists of the eighteenth century.[3] With Dickens the sensation novel founded on appeal to fear rose to its greatest popularity. The rise of the cheap book and the shilling pamphlet had prepared a public of uncultivated readers for whose tastes Dickens and his followers adapted the terrorism of The Romance of the Forest and brought it up to date, finding their materials in criminal records and tales of villainy.[4] They deal with the most terrible emotions and with the horrible acts resulting from them, and center about the Byronic hero, who for half a century dominated the sensation novel of England.[5] Thus they carry on the tradition of sensationalism and employ even the methods of the earlier writers--"surprise,

(1) Phillips (op.cit.) pp.7-9

(2) Ibid. p.9

(3) Ibid. p.6

(4) Ibid. p.11-13

(5) Ibid. p.155

coincidence, fortuitous retribution".[1]

The "Newgate novels" written between 1830 and 1840 and dealing with the adventures of criminals are directly descended from the diabolical in Gothic romance; in this tradition Bulwer-Lytton produced such tales as Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram, using the Byronic hero with modifications but still giving him many of the characteristics of the lawless villain of the earlier novels and in several cases even his appearance.[2] Although his novels frequently have a moral purpose, the author is less concerned with the moral than with the romanticism of crime.[3]

Most of these "Newgate novels" were trivial and decadent and the fashion was brought to an end by the ridicule of reviewers.[4] They are of interest to us for the influence they must have exerted on Poe who read widely and was particularly susceptible to the literary fads of his day.[5]

The Short Story

The horror theme was as popular in the short stories

(1) Phillips (op.cit.) p.189-191

(2) Ibid. p.164-5

(3) Ibid. p.168

(4) Ibid. p.179

(5) Cambiaire, Influence of Poe in France, p.46

of the day, which Poe was reading, as it was in the novel. These short tales were often printed in chapbooks illustrated with colored wood cuts in vivid hues[1] and displaying "double-barreled" titles. Examples of a few of these will suggest the character of their contents. One collection contained the following: Twelve O'clock or the Three Robbers, The Monks of Cluny or Castle Acre Monastery, The Tomb of Aurora or The Mysterious Summons. There are many collections of stories of this type in the British Museum today, some dating back to 1806. Edith Birkhead, author of The Tale of Terror, thinks that it is in such highly colored narratives that we must find the origin of the short tale of terror that became so popular throughout the nineteenth century.[2] The writers of these chapbook tales aimed to produce one of three effects--pathos, horror, or mystery, but for the most part they were "abominably written."[3]

It was probably the success of this type of tale in the chapbook that led to the sensational story in the periodicals. Everyone seemed to be writing tales of horror. Leigh Hunt, who had little sympathy with the

(1) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.74

(2) Ibid. p.186

(3) Canby--The Short Story in English, p.213

absurdities of the Gothic novel said, "A man who does not contribute his quota of grim story, now-a-days, seems hardly to be free of the republic of letters."[1]

One of the chief collections, The Romancist and Novelist's Library in ten volumes (1839-42) contains Gothic tales by the most popular authors of tales of terror--Walpole, Clara Reeve, Mrs. Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, Maturin, Mrs. Shelley, and Charles Brockden Brown besides many translations of French and German tales. Here and in The Story Teller (1833), another important collection, we have all the machinery of the Gothic novel including spectres and "villains with the baleful eye", perhaps in the guise of German necromancer or Russian count.[2]

Many terror stories were found in the old London Magazine,[3] but the periodical perhaps most famous of all for its terror tales was Blackwood's,[4] a magazine with which Poe was familiar and whose contents he referred to in cynical vein in his own article How to Write a Story for Blackwood's. Other magazines that catered to the popular taste for the supernatural and

(1) Quoted from Birkhead, p.186-187

(2) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.187

(3) Canby (op.cit.) p.213

(4) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.189

occult were the Dublin University Magazine, and two periodicals founded by Dickens--All the Year Round, and Household Words.[1] Many of these stories imitate the familiar Gothic devices but some show much ingenuity. One of these is The Sleepless Woman by W. Jerdan. The hero discovers that his wife never closes her eyes. Unable to escape their haunting gaze, he finally becomes mad and plunges into the lake.[2]

Natural horror rather than supernatural is dealt with in some of the stories in Blackwood's. The Man in the Bell (1821), one of this type, will be referred to later.

The gift books or annuals of the early nineteenth century, as well as the chapbooks and the periodicals, were full of tales of terror. These annuals began in England in 1823 and were exceedingly popular in the next two decades. The annual was a special leather edition for gift purposes and was found on the table of every fashionable lady. It contained short narratives and gave an opportunity to writers of short tales such as is given today by the fiction magazine.[3] The influence of Mrs. Radcliffe, Monk Lewis, and other Gothic

(1) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.189-90

(2) Ibid. p.189

(3) Canby (op.cit.) p.214

writers was evident in most of the stories, which dealt chiefly with horror, mystery, and pathos, but on the whole the tales in the American as well as the English annuals were weak and sentimental.

German Romanticism

With the greater interest in reading that came in England and America in the nineteenth century and with the more frequent opportunities of getting translations from other languages, there appeared influences from the outside that show a decided effect on the fiction of these countries.[1] German writers especially had been affected by the Gothic literature of England, and they in turn, by their ingenuity in dealing with Gothic themes, exerted considerable influence on English and American literature. Both Scott and De Quincey were interested in the literature of the German school, while among American writers Hawthorne, Irving, and Poe were especially fascinated by it.[2] The interest of the German writers in the treatment of science in the Gothic novel has been referred to. They developed this phase of Gothicism in their terror romance and by their treatment

(1) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.55

(2) Ibid. p.56

of dream elements, magnetism, and metempsychosis exerted a decided influence upon the English tales of the supernatural that followed them.[1] The effect of this cult of the scientific upon Poe will be discussed later in his relation to Hoffmann.

Part II

Introduction

The purpose of the second part of this thesis is to show the influence of these various elements of Gothicism on the fantastic tales of Poe. It is not a simple matter to point with any degree of certainty to anything as intangible as a literary influence, but where it has been impossible to offer convincing proof, in some instances analogies are presented which seem striking enough to indicate an indebtedness. In other cases it is possible to show only the tendencies of the time and the literary influences all about Poe to which he was exposed and which undoubtedly influenced one as susceptible to literary fads as he.

(1) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.59

A knowledge of Poe's methods of workmanship and of his propensity to make use of literary materials that he found at hand suitable to his purpose will help to give credence in some cases where doubt might exist as to his borrowings. Furthermore, a knowledge of his own reading will throw light on some of his sources. The opinions of authoritative critics must also be considered.

Poe's Method of Workmanship; His Reading.

In regard to Poe's method of workmanship Professor Woodberry says: "Poe had from the first formed the habit, which no author ever practiced so flagrantly, of republishing old material slightly if at all revised." He states that all Poe's poems to Burton's except the sonnet Silence used this method as did his critical articles in the same magazine even when he was reproaching other writers of the time with the charge of plagiarism.(1) In proof of the statement that Poe "appropriated ideas, just as he paraphrased statements of fact, from the books he read" (2) Professor Woodberry cites the similarity between Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and Morell's

(1) Woodberry, Life of Poe, Vol. 1, p.233

(2) Woodberry (op. cit.) Vol. II, p.252

Voyages. He states that "the detailed account of the South Seas is taken almost textually from Morell's Voyages by the easy process of close paraphrase.[1] King Pest, he says, is an imitation of Disraeli's Vivian Grey's Adventure; and three other stories, Duc de L'Omelette, Bon-Bon, and Loss of Breath, (the last a parody on the German tales) show distinct traces of Poe's reading and little of his own invention.[2]

In regard to his reading E. C. Stedman says that Poe "had more knowledge of books ancient and modern than most of his compeers south of New England," [3] and various critics (discussed in the following pages) are convinced that he knew Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, Beckford's Vathek and other Gothic works.

Poe read and admired Bulwer and Disraeli (both of whom used Gothic motives) and in his critical works praises both these writers and Godwin and Scott as well.[4] Bulwer's Too Beautiful for Anything, says Professor Woodberry, was apparently a favorite book of Poe's,[5] and other books of Bulwer's Poe reviewed while on Graham's.

(1) Woodberry (op.cit.) Vol. I, p.191

(2) Ibid. p.130

(3) Introduction to Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. I, p.CXVI

(4) Woodberry (op.cit.) Vol. I, p.174

(5) Ibid. I p.130-1

Godwin's Gothic tale, Caleb Williams, Poe had read and had carried on a correspondence with Dickens regarding its structure.[1] He was "the disciple of Coleridge,"[2] read Byron,[3] and had much enthusiasm for Shelley whose sensational novel Zastrozzi with its "many reminiscences of Mrs. Radcliffe and of 'Monk' Lewis"[4] he had undoubtedly read.

Inferior as were the tales in the annuals and magazines of Poe's day, nevertheless these were the stories he was reading at the beginning of his literary career,[5] and by which his impressionable mind was influenced, and no better tribute to his genius can be given than a comparison of his tales with the flabby productions of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. Although separated by his genius from the average writer of the day "he belonged distinctly", says Professor Canby, "to the school of romantic emotionalism where the Landors and the Shelleys had been experimenting."[6] (Mrs. Shelley's short tales were extremely sentimental.) His purpose

(1) Woodberry (op.cit.) Vol. I, p. 327

(2) Woodberry (op.cit.) Vol. II, p.196

(3) Ibid. p.46

(4) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.122

(5) Canby (op.cit.) p.216

(6) Ibid. p.227

and his substance were the same and his work "was easily classified by his contemporaries as another variety of the 'grim tale'".[1]

Professor Woodberry says, "It is an error to suppose that Poe's romantic tales were new in kind; they were only finer in quality, and by the presence of genius and art; such tales were common in the magazines of the day." Professor Woodberry gives a list of similar stories that appeared in Godey's and in comparing Poe's tales to these others he adds that Poe's genius had "more vitality of its own than it ever borrowed from others."[2]

Poe's Indebtedness to the Gothic Romance of England and America

It is possible in some cases to point to analogies between Poe's tales and the novels he was reading, the internal evidence in his tales offering convincing proof of the influence of such authors as Mrs. Radcliffe, Monk Lewis, and Beckford as well as of the nineteenth century writers mentioned. Such proofs of indebtedness are contained in the following sections.

(1) Canby (op.cit.) p.227

(2) Woodberry (op.cit.) Vol. I, p.134

The Fall of the House of Usher

The house and furnishings in this story are reminiscent of Mrs. Radcliffe's deserted abbeys by which Miss Birkhead thinks they were suggested.[1] The Gothic atmosphere is given by the accumulation of details all in harmony with the picture of desolation which the Gothic novelist revels in: "vacant eye-like windows",[2] "rank sedges", "white trunks of decayed trees", "the black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling", "minute fungi" covering the walls and the "crumbling condition" of the stones. Poe was not unconscious of this influence, for he speaks of the "Gothic archway of the hall" which the narrator entered. Every detail of the interior with its "air of stern, deep and irredeemable gloom" suggests the ghostly atmosphere that pervades Mrs. Radcliffe's castles. In Usher's house are "many dark and intricate passages", "sombre tapestries" on the walls, floors of "ebon blackness" and the rattle of "phantasmagoric armorial trophies." The Castle of Otranto, the first Gothic novel, introduced the rattling of armor and it has been echoing through

(1) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.219

(2) Quotations not otherwise designated are from Poe's tales.

Gothic fiction ever since. Diego's "hair stood on end" [1] as he described the giant "all clad in armour" [1] in the courtyard of the castle. Then "we heard a violent motion, and the rattling of armour, as if the giant was rising." [1] Poe's room reveals "dark and tattered draperies, which tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed." When Usher opens a casement, "the impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet." The tapestries in Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic rooms are continually wafted to and fro by the wind which rushes through the crevices and along the deserted passages as it continues to do in many a later Gothic tale. In Poe's story a blast of wind caused the "huge antique panels" to draw back their "ponderous ebony jaws" revealing the ghostly figure of Lady Madeline.

Usher himself with his disordered mind, the last of the family line, fits into this Gothic picture. The "wild improvisations of his speaking guitar", his ghostly pictures, and his song full of premonition of impending doom qualify him for the role of romantic hero of a Gothic tale.

(1) Walpole--Castle of Otranto, p.31

There are sharp grating sounds as the iron doors move upon their hinges, the torches burn with faint light in the oppressive atmosphere of the vault. (In most Gothic novels they are suddenly extinguished in a dark passage or a gloomy vault.) Such devices of the terror novelist Poe uses, but adds new suggestions of his own to heighten the horror. In this tale there is the glow of the luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion and his suggestion of the "sentience of all vegetable things." With more subtlety than the Gothic novelist could manage Poe treats this theme, emphasising the spiritual relationship between the house and its owner. Poe's terror is more subjective. The Gothic ruin may startle and terrify its inmates but Usher's belief in "the sentience of all vegetable things" and in his spiritual unity with the fungus-covered dwelling produces a more formidable terror as we forsee the impending catastrophe.

Like the Gothic novelist Poe makes his weather harmonize with the emotions of his characters: the wild tumult of the storm that nearly sweeps Usher and his guest off their feet is symbolic of the agitation in their minds as they hear mysterious sounds emanating from the lower regions of the house.

Railo believes that a poem of Lewis's is "fairly closely related to Poe's story."[1] From this poem he mentions the following analogies: the lonely mansion by the moor, which the traveler approaches on horse-back, the moonbeams shining through a rent in the walls, the presence of the young woman who is sick and dies, the sighing which resembles "the noise of the dry and hollow sounding wood" in Usher, the crypt containing the body of the young woman who is still living and whose struggles to escape are heard, and the collapse of the house which in a storm is struck by lightning and falls in ruins.

"The yawning earth pours forth a
stream of blood
And groans re-echo, where the
mansion stood.
Pale at the sound, with oft reverted
eyes,
Far, far aloof, the starting
traveller flies."[2]

In Poe's story the traveler "fled aghast. The storm was still abroad----Suddenly there shot along the path

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.363

(2) Quoted by Railo (op.cit.) p.364-5 from Lewis's poem.

a wild light.----The radiance was that of the----blood-red moon which now shone vividly through that once barely discernible fissure----the fissure rapidly widened--there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind----I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder----the deep and dark tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the 'House of Usher' ". These similarities are so remarkable that we might assume that Poe had read this poem and used it as his framework although it is impossible, Railo thinks, to attach "unconditional belief" to this assumption since the themes in some of the German stories are similar.(1)

Metzengerstein

The resemblance between this story and Hoffmann's Das Majorat will be referred to later. Other Gothic elements are to be found in the haunted tapestry and in the use of gigantism. This motive appears in Vathek where the giant is found in company with genii and dwarfs and other supernatural beings. Although the giant is an Oriental character, he found his way frequently into the earlier Gothic novels. In "The Castle

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.363-365

of Otranto" the giant motive is frequently used. The devil in Lewis's The Monk is of enormous stature and the monster created by Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein is of colossal size.(1)

In Poe's story it is the fiery colored horse pictured on the tapestry that is of gigantic size. This demoniac horse has other supernatural qualities for he disappears from the tapestry and prances in real life up the path to the owner's castle. The master strangely affected by this occurrence has a foreboding of evil which is realized when one day, returning home from a wild ride on this same horse, he finds the castle in flames. Still riding the spirited animal, he leaps into the midst of the flames and the castle falls in ruins about horse and rider. Then appears an unusual variation of the ghost motive: a colossal figure of a horse in a cloud of smoke hovers about where the castle had stood.

The theme of metempsychosis --a favorite with the German writers--is also illustrated here,(2) the exchange of identity taking place in this case between the animal and an inanimate object on the tapestry.

(1) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.37

(2) Ibid. p.291

William Wilson

If William Wilson is closely related to Hoffmann's Die Elixiere des Teufels as Professor Cobb points out in his studies, both Wilson and Medardus, Hoffmann's hero, are direct descendants of the criminal monk, Ambrosio, in Lewis's Gothic novel The Monk. Railo says that Hoffmann "borrowed a good many outward traits from Lewis, and that but for the earlier work the later could hardly have been given its present contents" and mentions in illustration the character and experiences of the hero in each story. Miss Birkhead also says that Hoffmann's romance "is manifestly written under its [The Monk's] inspiration." [1] Hoffmann apparently is here the connecting link between Poe and Lewis.

A purely Gothic description is Poe's picture of the rambling mediaeval building where William Wilson went to school. Its "fretted Gothic steeple", frowning ponderous gate, the "creak of its mighty hinges", its endless windings, "massy walls", and "pointed Gothic windows" would do justice to Mrs. Radcliffe with her crumbling abbeys. Even the bell resembles that of the old Gothic castle with its "deep hollow note" and "sullen and sudden roar" as it breaks "upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere."

(1) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.70

The theme of dual personality on which this story is based--a motive often recurring in Lewis--will be discussed later under Cobb's studies of Poe and Hoffmann.

The Oval Portrait

The scene of this story is laid in the turret of a Gothic castle. A convincing evidence of its Gothic derivation is Poe's own reference here to Mrs. Radcliffe: "The château into which my valet had ventured to make forcible entrance----was one of those piles of commingled gloom and grandeur, which have so long frowned along the Apennines, not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe."

The portrait motive common to Gothic novels is used in this story, but Poe's treatment of it is unusual. The portrait plays an important part in The Castle of Otranto, in Mrs. Radcliffe, where "it displays in every castle hall the features of ancestors", and again in Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer. It had a particular fascination for the Gothic novelist and frequently was endowed with supernatural powers.[1] In Poe's story the picture itself had an effect on the beholder which startled and appalled with

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.304

its mysterious and supernatural power--a power similar to that exercised by pictures in Lewis and Maturin. The picture of Matilda in The Monk has a special fascination for the monk, while Melmoth's portrait has a terrifying and demoniac effect because of its magnetic and blazing eyes. Like Maturin, Poe deals with the theme of a "living" portrait.(1)

The Assignation

In The Haunted Castle Railo shows the influence of the castle of the terror romanticists on later writers. "Its haunted room becomes the laboratory of workers of magic, of alchemists----becomes in general the mysterious hidden chamber where the terrifying element is housed.----For the reader aware of its history it is an easy task to strip off the modern equipment, when it stands confessed as merely a new rendering of the old picture of the haunted castle." (2)

The room in The Assignation, he thinks, is a development from the Gothic castle--the secret room "in which devils were conjured up or the art of alchemy practised." (3) Something of the sensuous atmosphere of

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.305

(2) Ibid. p.171

(3) Ibid. p.170

the Oriental Vathek is also suggested by Poe's description: "There the eye wandered from object to object, and rested upon none--neither the grotesques of the Greek painters, not the sculptures of the best Italian days, nor the huge carvings of untutored Egypt. Rich draperies in every part of the room trembled to the vibration of low, melancholy music, whose origin was not to be discovered. The senses were oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, reeking up from strange convolute censers, together with multitudinous flaring and flickering tongues of emerald and violet fire."

Music from an unknown source has already been referred to as a motive common to Gothic romance. Railo gives numerous examples of the treatment of this theme.(1) In fact, inexplicable music is so frequently heard in these novels that Miss Scarborough remarks rather flippantly that "its constant recurrence suggests that there must have been victrolas in mediaeval times." (2)

Morella

The theme of metempsychosis--the passing of the soul at death into another human being--while of ancient origin, is a favorite of Hoffmann's as we shall see, and

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.53

(2) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.45

is used by Poe in several of his stories.

Morella tells with powerful effect of a beautiful woman of profound learning who instructs her husband in forbidden lore. He develops a distaste for her which finally turns into hate. She gradually declines and at her death says she will live on in her daughter. Morella's identity seems to have passed into her daughter and the father is horrified as he discovers "in the conceptions of the child the adult powers and faculties of the woman", the "perfect identity" of her smile, and of the "intense and bewildering meaning of her eyes." When she is being christened, the father, who has chosen no name for her, hesitates, then whispers the first name that comes to his mind, Morella. At that the child "turned her glassy eyes from the earth to heaven, and, falling prostrate on the black slabs of our ancestral vault, responded--'I am here!'" The metempsychosis was complete for when she was carried, dead, to the tomb, there was no trace of the mother's body in the tomb where she had been laid.

Besides its similarity to German Gothicism in theme, this story resembles the English Gothic novels in the type of character represented by Morella. The demoniac woman with occult powers was sometimes "scheming and vicious" as in Mrs. Radcliffe's works or a "demon pure and simple" as in Lewis's novels. In the German romances she was

generally the ally of the wicked monk.[1] Poe's Morella may be compared to Matilda of The Monk in her knowledge of the occult; and to Vathek's mother, Carathis, a predecessor who is allied with the powers of the underworld.[2] This power is shown in Morella's prophecy of her husband's destiny: "Thy days shall be days of sorrow----For the hours of thy happiness are over----thou shalt bear about with thee thy shroud on earth, as do the Moslems at Mecca."

Ligeia

This tale is another study of metempsychosis. Ligeia dies and her husband marries Lady Rowena. Shortly after, this lady dies but her husband is startled to see signs of life animating the corpse. Life returns but it is Ligeia, not the Lady Rowena, who by the power of her own will has struggled back from death.

In his description of the beauty of Ligeia Poe puts emphasis on her eyes--a feature that was "usually a source of personal magnetic terror with the romanticists"[3] and was used with powerful effect by Maturin and later by

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.260

(2) Ibid. p.261

(3) Ibid. p.305

Bulwer-Lytton in his Dweller of the Threshold.[1] Ligeia's eyes were "fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad." But the "strangeness" of her eyes, her husband learned, was chiefly in their expression. This haunted him to such a degree that he found "in the commonest objects of the universe a circle of analogies to that expression. ---- I recognized it----in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis----in the ocean, in the falling of a meteor----in the glances of unusually aged people---- in certain sounds of stringed instruments."

Like Morella, Ligeia recalls the mysterious women of terror-romance in her learning and knowledge of the occult. Poe says that the learning of his heroine was immense. "In the classical tongues was she deeply proficient, and as far as my own acquaintance extended in regard to the modern dialects of Europe, I have never known her at fault." Her learning was astounding even in the "mysteries of transcendentalism."

The abbey which Ligeia's husband purchased after her death has all the Gothic atmosphere of gloom and melancholy and even the "verdant decay hanging about it" to complete the picture, and was "in one of the wildest

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.263

and least frequented portions of fair England." The "gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, the almost savage aspect of the domain" were in harmony with the "feelings of utter abandonment" of the purchaser.

The reader can not doubt the influence of the Gothic novel in Poe's description of the bridal chamber in a high turret of the abbey. Here we have again the "aged vine" clambering "up the massy walls of the turret----the ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak,----excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device."

Much in the description of the Oriental magnificence of the ebony bridal chamber with its hangings of cloth of gold encrusted with grotesque figures which assumed strange and ghastly shapes as they were swayed by the wind reminds one of the splendor of the hall in Vathek--with its ebony portals, and curtains "brocaded with crimson and gold";[1] without doubt Poe was influenced by this strange oriental tale.

Railo thinks[2] that this pentagonal tower room may have been suggested to Poe by Scott's description, in his preface to Quentin Durward, of a similar octagonal

(1) Beckford--Vathek, p.126

(2) Railo (op.cit.) p.363

room. There is much that is similar in the details of the two descriptions: Scott's casements "filled with stained glass, through two of which streamed the lustre of the setting sun"[1] and Poe's windows, "tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either sun or moon---- fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within"; the curiously carved wood and the latticed windows in each room. Poe is known to have had an admiration for Scott and it is not strange that he was influenced by Scott's Gothicism.

A detail that reveals Poe's acquaintance with the stock characters of Gothic fiction is his reference to the guilty monk, always a popular figure with the terror romanticists.

Another motive in Ligeia that was used with such effect in The Fall of the House of Usher is the rushing wind. There was a "strong continual current of wind behind the draperies, giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole." This motive is so familiar to Gothic romance that it is ridiculed by Jane Austen in her inimitable parody on the Gothic novel--Northanger Abbey.

(1) Scott--Introduction to Quentin Durward p.XXXVIII

The Masque of the Red Death

The stage here is set with the usual Gothic properties: "castellated abbey" surrounded by a "strong and lofty wall," winding corridors, tall Gothic windows, a "gigantic clock of ebony" whose chime struck with so strange a tone that at each hour the musicians were compelled to cease their playing and every thing came to a standstill.

Railo traces the castle of Prince Propero in this tale to Scott's Castle of the Seven Proud Shields in Harold the Dauntless, Canto VI. Scott's castle has seven rooms similarly furnished and Railo says that "Poe merely recreated it in the light of his own imagination."(1)

The motive of the masquerade in this tale he says "hails obviously from de Quincey's romance, Klosterheim or the Masque (1832)----one of the last typically old-fashioned terror-romantic romances written in England."(1)

The ghost motive in the tale of terror is rather restricted in its use. There is frequently the "demoniac glance" and the presence of a ghost as an avenger at a feast. Poe uses the ghost idea in both ways. In The Masque of the Red Death we have an example of the latter use. The ghost appears in the form of a masked figure

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.363

"tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave----his vesture dabbled in blood and his broad brow----besprinkled with the scarlet horror." He is here a symbolic figure and not the crude device of Walpole, and represents the death from which the pleasure loving guests have sought to escape by taking refuge in the castle far from the plague-striken city. By such means it is that Poe strikes the note of "poetic pessimism" that gives to many of his tales the terror of the soul which strikes deeper than the more objective and superficial horrors of the earlier novelists.

Shadow

Here is another variation of the ghost theme of the Gothic novel. At the time of the story a pestilence had swept the land and seven friends were sitting about an ebony table in a gloomy room hung with black draperies. They were celebrating in merry fashion the funeral of a friend who lay enshrouded in their midst, his eyes turned on them in bitterness. The hangings opened to reveal a "dark and undefined shadow" which is not that of "man nor God". It is the ghost of the Catacombs who represents hosts of departed friends.

Railo says of this story: "The setting breathes the

typical nightmare atmosphere of terror romance." (1)

The Man of the Crowd

This tale is the story of an old man who is discovered always in crowds where evil is planned. He represents crime personified. Here again is the theme of dual personality but the instincts of good and evil of mankind rather than of the individual are presented. Mankind is here the descendant of Lewis's monk, Ambrosio, and the theme is similar to that of William Wilson in its representation of his dual personality.

Berenice

This study of insanity has much in common with those in Lewis, Maturin, and Charles Brockden Brown. Brown was greatly interested in morbid psychology and in his most famous novel, Edgar Huntly, he studies the working of the brain under the strain of deep emotion. He uses insanity to make more mysterious his supernatural effects, and his use of this theme is, like Poe's, more subtle than that of the earlier Gothic writers. He "knew the effect of mystery and dread on the human mind and by slow, cumulative suggestion he makes us feel a

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.258

creeping awe that the unwieldy machinery of pure Gothicism never could achieve." [1] It seems probable that Poe learned from him some of his own skill in describing effects of haunting terror for the "dark labyrinths of insanity" held for each a strange fascination.

In Poe's story Egaeus betrays his mental disorder by his abnormal attention to details. He is obsessed by the idea of Berenice's teeth and goes for them even to the grave. Poe's aim is to evoke the sensation of horror of the most gruesome type and he succeeds by making his climax a psychological as well as physical one.

The Tell Tale Heart

Here is another study of insanity in which the abnormal sense of hearing is involved as in The Fall of the House of Usher. A murderer is driven to confess his crime because of his anguish at the sound of the heart beats of his murdered victim.

The motive of the "evil eye" appears in the story. "Whenever it fell upon me," says the narrator, "my blood ran cold." Its haunting effect recalls a similar use of the theme in a magazine story already mentioned, The Sleepless Woman. Here the husband pursued everywhere by the eyes of wife--eyes that combined the quali-

(1) Scarborough (op.cit.) p.39

ties of the robin and falcon--sees no remedy but to take his own life. Poe's character, driven to madness by the vulture eye, kills its possessor.

Other Tales that Show the Gothic Influence

In many of Poe's tales it is impossible to point to parallelisms to the Gothic or to indicate anything more tangible than a general atmosphere of horror that is common to both. Their aim was the same--to achieve an effect of horror by every possible device, and in the background of such scenes of terror as Poe presents we feel the influence of the haunted castle of the Gothic novel.

In Silence we have a description of nature in which the unnatural silence inspires terror.

The Cask of Amontillado, one of the most terrible of stories, is a tale of revenge with numerous devices to increase horror. The jingling of bells is the only sound heard as the victim is walled up in the catacombs--surely a grimly ironic ending.

The horrors of the ship-wrecked sailor in The Manuscript Found in a Bottle and the more frightful horrors of The Descent into the Maelstrom are on the borderline of the supernatural while the realistic terrors of The Pit and the Pendulum are suggested with equal skill. Terrors of both types were dealt with by the Gothic

novelists[1] as evidenced in The Monk, Melmoth the Wanderer, Vathek and other novels. Poe's source for The Pit and the Pendulum was probably in the magazine stories of his time.[2] One of these, The Man in the Bell (1821), which appeared in Blackwood's, has already been mentioned. Miss Birkhead suggests that "the maddening clangour of sound, the frightful images that crowd into the reeling brain of the man suspended in the belfrey, are described with an unflinching realism that reminds us of The Pit and the Pendulum." [3] In another story of the same type, Iron Shroud (1830) by William Mudford, is found an ingenious device to increase the horror. The windows of the dungeon disappear and the iron walls and roof contract to imprison the victim[3]--a motive that Poe uses with impressive effect in The Pit and the Pendulum. Poe was probably familiar also with the Inquisition scenes of Godwin's St. Leon and was influenced if not directly, at least through Godwin by similar scenes in Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe, for Godwin's scenes "were undoubtedly coloured faintly by those of Lewis's Monk and Mrs. Radcliffe's Italian." [4]

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.325

(2) Woodberry (op.cit.) Vol. I, p.382 gives list.

(3) Birkhead (op.cit.) p.194

(4) Ibid. p.114

In the powerful but horrible story, The Black Cat, every device of the terror-novelist is used to intensify the torture.

Poe's tale, Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar, which is based on mesmerism allies the author with those writers who were experimenting with the pseudo-scientific in their Gothic tales. In Poe's story the victim of mesmerism, M. Valdemar, lives for seven months at the point of death which has been postponed by means of a few mesmeric passes and manipulations by the hand of the hypnotist. Poe describes all the physical terrors of a living death; the mental agony of the victim, whose hideous utterances are as from the tongue of the dead; and the unspeakable loathsomeness of the final dissolution with a truly Gothic relish for horror for its own sake.

Poe's Indebtedness to German Romance

There has been some question as to the extent of Poe's indebtedness to the German romances of E. T. A. Hoffmann. In fact, C. A. Smith in his valuable book Poe, How to Know Him denies any debt to the German. He says "German criticism errs, I think, in its insistence on the supposed debt that Poe owed to German literature and especially to Hoffmann. No indebtedness can be traced. Poe could not read German and, if he could, the native temper of his mind was such as to make him independent of Hoffmann and the Hoffmann

school.[1] However, in a later chapter of the same book he quotes passages from Poe's review of Thiodolf by Baron de la Motte Fouque which shows Poe's knowledge of German literature in translation. He also remarks that Poe considered Fouque's Undive "almost faultless". According to Poe it was "a model of models in regard to the high artistical talent which it evinces." [2]

Professor Woodberry states that Poe had no acquaintance with German literature in the original--that he knew Hoffmann only through Carlyle and Scott who wrote of him in the English reviews in 1827,[3] and thinks that Poe's debt to German literature has been overemphasized.

Poe himself in his preface to The Fall of the House of Usher denied the accusation of "Germanism" that was frequently brought against him. "The subject of terror", he says, "is not of Germany, but of the soul." He insisted that his tales did not contain "that species of pseudo-horror which we are taught to call Germanic, for no better reason than that some of the secondary names of German literature have become identified with its folly." But, as Professor Canby remarks, it is this very "terror of the soul" that the Germans "for the first time

(1) C. A. Smith--Poe, How to Know Him, p.8

(2) Ibid. p.171

(3) Woodberry (op.cit.) Vol. I, p.379

systematically wrought into fiction" which influenced Poe. "The quickening agency of this German school in the genius of Poe is not now to be doubted," he says, and he believes that a comparison of Poe's and Hoffmann's stories shows similarities "which are close enough to prove a knowledge, a sympathy, and a lion-like borrowing." (1)

Edmund C. Stedman, also, discounts Poe's statement in these words: "Nevertheless, there is pseudo-terror to be found in certain of his pieces, and enough of Ernst Hoffmann's method to suggest that the brilliant author of the 'Fantasiestücke'----was one of Poe's early teachers." (2) Stedman recognizes the essential differences between Hoffmann and Poe but is nevertheless profoundly impressed by Hoffmann's influence.

Eino Railo, author of The Haunted Castle, an exhaustive study of Gothic literature, says that Poe knew German, (3) and H. A. Beers in A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century calls attention to the fact that Tieck was not unknown to Poe. (4) Poe himself mentions Tieck's Journey into the Blue Distance

(1) Canby (op.cit.) p.229

(2) E. C. Stedman--Introduction to Works, p.CVIII

(3) Railo (op.cit.) p.363

(4) Beers--A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century, p.162

in his Fall of the House of Usher and a further indication of his acquaintance with this writer is given by Poe's criticism of Hawthorne in his review of Twice Told Tales. Hawthorne, he says "is not original in any sense." Tieck's "manner in some of his works," Poe asserts, "is absolutely identical with that habitual to Hawthorne." (1)

Professor Cobb's Study of Poe and Hoffmann

The most thorough discussion of Poe's debt to German Gothicism is found in Professor Cobb's pamphlet, The Influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. This pamphlet gives convincing evidence of Hoffmann's influence on several of Poe's tales. It reviews an article by Professor Gruener, Notes on the Influence of E. T. A. Hoffmann on E. A. Poe in the Publications of the Modern Language Association of America for March 1904, the main points of which are these:

1. Poe acknowledges his debt to Hoffmann in calling his tales "phantasy pieces", a title that he probably saw in Carlyle's discussion of Hoffmann.
2. Poe's title Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque was suggested by Scott's article on German Romance in the Foreign Quarterly Review, July, 1827. Scott

(1) Works of Edgar Allan Poe--Ed. by Stedman and Woodberry, Vol. VII, p.26

mentions this title, and Poe had read that number of the magazine for he quotes from it in one of his letters.

3. Poe took the idea of his Folio Club from Hoffmann's Serapionsbruder. The constitution of the club is almost identical with that in Hoffmann's story. The similarity is so striking that Poe decided not to use it, and it was not published as an introduction to the story until Harrison's edition of the tales appeared.

4. Properties in The Fall of the House of Usher closely resemble those in Hoffmann's Das Majorat. Scott in his article has described them in detail: "Part of the castle was in ruins; and by its fall made a deep chasm, which extended from the highest turret down to the dungeon of the castle." In Poe's story a "barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn" is analogous.

Professor Cobb thinks that "Poe's interest in Hoffmann was greatly aroused by this article [by Scott] and that his acquaintance with the German author's work is to be dated from this time." He says that most English and foreign critics believe that Poe was indebted to Hoffmann and to other German romanticists for his material and technique. He quotes the opinion of the French critic, Arvède Barine, as being representative of the French point of view: "La science extraordinaire de la peur, à tous les degrés et dans toutes ses variétés, n' avait été emprunté à personne. Poe n'en avait pas en besoin. Il n'avait eu, comme il le dit, qu' à regarder dans son âme." But for material and method Barine thinks he was indebted to Hoffmann. "Il possédait son Hoffmann sur le bout du doigt. Non content de lui emprunter son genre, il avait appris à son école à donner de la realité, par la précision et la variété du détail, aux fantasies les plus extravagantes."

Cobb quotes also from German criticism most of which, he says, is of the opinion that Poe was influenced by Hoffmann and the other romanticists.

A chapter in the pamphlet is devoted to a discussion of German literature in America in the early nineteenth century; there was a "lively interest in German Romanticism both in America and England in the Thirties and Forties" says Cobb, and Poe as a magazine editor was "a

zealous reader of magazines and followed closely American and foreign publications."

Professor Cobb states that there was an English translation of Hoffmann's Die Elixiere des Teufels in 1824 and of Das Majorat in 1826, both appearing before Poe's stories that, in each case, show a German influence. Moreover, a French translation of all of Hoffmann's works was completed in 1833, the year of Poe's first tale. In addition the English and American magazines had articles on German literature, and Carlyle's German Romance appeared in 1827. This material, then, was accessible to Poe even if he did not know German.

Cobb, however, goes farther than other critics and asserts that there was no doubt as to Poe's ability to read German, but says it is "impossible to discover when and where he acquired this ability." He believes that the fact that Poe nowhere mentions Hoffmann was due to his fear of the charge of plagiarism.

By pointing out similarities in the stories of the two authors, Professor Cobb shows Hoffmann's influence on four of Poe's stories as follows:

Hoffmann's Die Elixiere des Teufels

and

Poe's William Wilson

Hoffmann's story deals with a monk, Medardus, beset

with temptations, who leaves his monastery and starts on a career of crime, and finally repents and returns to the monastery.

1. The idea of good and evil in man's nature is represented in both by a story of a man and his double, in each case strikingly alike in appearance and mind. In the course of the story, each hero meets his double.

2. Each story traces the career of evil in detail.

3. Each tale is in the first person written when the hero is at the point of death.

4. A striking incident in Hoffmann's story occurs when Medardus thinks he is responsible for his double's death and later finds that he is not. Poe uses the same motive but makes it his climax. He makes Wilson responsible for his double's death, thus killing the good in himself.

5. Medardus' double impells him to evil. Poe uses the same motive but reverses it--Wilson's double is his good instinct.

6. In both Hoffmann and Poe, emphasis is placed on the exact sound of the voices of hero and double and on the whispering of the double.

Poe puts more emphasis upon whispering. William Wilson spoke always in a whisper and his double imitates his voice.

7. The incident of gambling is used in both, and in each the hero wins.

8. The use of the supernatural is similar but Poe does not explain it as Hoffmann does, and so gains more sense of mystery and awe in his story.

On the whole Poe's effect is more striking, for the supernatural tone in his tale is better sustained, but he has used the motives and incidents which served his purpose in Hoffmann's story.

Hoffmann's Magnetiseur

and

Poe's Tale of the Ragged Mountains

Both authors are interested in hypnotism and in the doctrine of metempsychosis. This does not necessarily imply influence but when both doctrines are combined in one story and worked out with the same motives and details, it is striking enough to suggest an influence.

1. Besides these two doctrines both have dreams and visions.

2. Both have for the central character a man who has hypnotic power over another: a Danish major in Hoffmann's tale; Dr. Templeton in Poe's.

3. In each the mastery of a hypnotist over another character is emphasized--a mastery gained gradually in each case.

4. In both, the dreams of the subject are controlled by the hypnotist.

5. The idea of transmigration of souls is used in the same way: in each story the individual in his second existence presents a striking resemblance to his appearance in his first.

6. The dream of Bedloe in Poe's tale and that of Medardus in Hoffmann's are similar in incidents, in phrasing, and in the manner of death that the dream pictures--one dies by an arrow, the other by a dagger.

7. Both authors express the idea that in dreams we get a vision of another world.

Hoffmann's Die Jesuitenkirche in G

and

Poe's Oval Portrait

1. Both have the same theme--the selfishness of Art.

2. The introductions are similar. In Hoffmann's story a traveler, because of an accident to his carriage, must stay several days with a professor in a Jesuit College. Here he learns about an artist whose story makes Hoffmann's narrative. In Poe's story a traveler is wounded and while recuperating in a deserted chateau, he sees a picture that impresses him and learns the story of it from a book he finds on his pillow.

3. In Hoffmann's story the artist marries a princess who has been his ideal. After marriage his interest in his work ceases and he loses his ability to paint. He is angry with his wife and causes her death, after which he paints a life-like picture of her. Her life thus becomes the price of his success. The story in Poe's tale is similar: here an artist paints his wife's portrait and discovers only at her death that he was painting her very life into the picture. Her life is the sacrifice to his art.

Poe's story has finer dramatic power, is better organized, and more effective than Hoffmann's.

Hoffmann's Doge und Dogaressa

and

Poe's Assignation

Professor Cobb quotes from E. C. Stedman who says: "The Assignation derives from Hoffmann's Doge und Dogaressa, and the tableau with the Marchesa is a radiantly poetic variation upon the balcony scene in the earlier tale." (Stedman says in reference to the obvious similarities of these two stories that "Hoffmann's spell was unquestionable.) (1)

1. The story and the Venetian setting are the same.

(Hoffmann's story is of the old Doge of Venice; the Dogess, his young wife; and the youth, Antonio, who has loved her from childhood when she saved his life by rescuing him from a poisonous snake. At the death of the Doge, the Dogess and Antonio are united, only to meet death together in a storm which arises as they are escaping from Venice. In Poe's story the beautiful Marchesa in Venice, wife of the old and intriguing Mentoni is united in death with her young lover. The setting

(1) E. C. Stedman (op.cit.) Introduction to Vol. I, p.CIX

is the same, the plot in its essential features is the same, and in both the conclusion is similar--the catastrophe in each case being the fulfillment of a premonition in the mind of the central character.[1] In Hoffman's story the lovers drown while in Poe's they poison themselves.)

2. The opening picture in each is similar: in Hoffmann, a description of a painting representing the main characters; in Poe, a similar scene full of the romantic charm of Venice.

Although Professor Cobb thinks the description of the magnificence of the palace of the stranger in The Assignation the product of Poe's own imagination, there are certain elements of the description, noted in the preceding discussion, that are strikingly reminiscent of the Gothic castle.

With those critics who, like Professor Gruener, think that Poe imitated certain tricks of Hoffmann's style, Cobb does not agree. Poe, he says, "is indebted to the Germans for motives and combinations of motives, not for stylistic attributes." Mesmerism, metempsychosis, and other similar motives are found in other writ-

(1) Comparison not from Cobb but made from my reading of the two stories before obtaining Cobb's pamphlet.

ers as well, but Poe uses the same motives in the same way. He has "combined these themes in the exact agreement with the grouping employed by Hoffmann" and thus is proved his indebtedness.(1)

E. C. Stedman, also, was impressed by the analogy between Das Majorat and The Fall of the House of Usher which Professor Gruener has referred to. In this tale of Poe's and also in his Metzengerstein he sees resemblances to Hoffmann's story with its "ancestral castle of a noble family, on a wild and remote estate near the Baltic sea--the interior, where the moon shines through oriel windows upon tapestry and carven furniture and wainscoting--the uncanny scratchings against a bricked-up door,--the old Freiherr forseeing the hour of his death,--the ominous conflagration,--the turret falling of its own decay into a chasm at its base." (2)

Another possible German source of The Fall of the House of Usher, mentioned by Railo, who sees good reasons for believing this a source, is Achim V. Arnim's story Majoratsherren. The emphasis on the abnormal senses is followed by Poe in Usher's peculiar sensitiveness to

(1) End of summary of Cobb's study.

(2) E. C. Stedman (op.cit.) Introduction to Vol. I, p.CIX

sounds--"a theme obviously derived from Arnim's story."[1][2] It is interesting to note that one of the books read by Usher was Tieck's Journey into the Blue Distance. Canby suggests that we can easily believe that Poe himself is Roderick Usher, poring over his books of German romance.[3]

In all these stories it is evident that Poe used materials and motives that he found at hand, and although these tales may remind one constantly of his German predecessor they are not to be considered in any sense a servile imitation of Hoffmann's narratives for Poe has endowed his work with his own genius and in each case makes a new story out of the old. Both writers have an intellectual basis for their fantasies which, we have seen, was lacking in the weakly sentimental tale of horror of the nineteenth century annual, but Poe's stories "gained enormously in art"[4] over Hoffmann's and "awakened the emotions by means peculiar to his own genius."[4] He had read what the Germans had read; he resembled them in his introspective and mystical point of view and in their method of dealing with terror and making it "strike through

(1) Railo (op.cit.) p.363

(2) Poe uses the motive again in The Tell Tale Heart.

(3) Canby (op.cit.) p.230

(4) Ibid. p.229

to the soul." But Poe goes farther than Hoffmann.[1] He uses less of the verisimilitude of every day life. Hoffmann's Weird Tales abound in life-like heroes and heroines--men and women of every day life, while Poe's characters are idealized--the "tapestry-figures"[2] of his own weaving.

Conclusion

It is certain that Poe was indebted to Gothic romance for the general atmosphere of horror that pervades most of his stories and frequently for specific settings and themes. Through his wide reading he has consciously or unconsciously absorbed much from Gothicism and used it in his tales. There is no clue in his letters that gives definite information as to his sources, and critics who state that he knew the Gothic novels fail to state the source of their knowledge. They seem to depend rather upon the general atmosphere of Gothicism that pervades his work. Certain striking comparisons have been made with Gothic romance of England and more specific instances of borrowings from the German are revealed in

(1) Canby (op.cit.) p.230-231

(2) Stedman (op.cit.) Introduction to Vol. I, p.CVIII

Professor Cobb's studies, but for the most part the Gothic influence is a general one which Poe absorbed from the literary atmosphere about him.

But Poe was by no means a servile imitator of this fiction. He read the sentimental terror stories of the magazines of his day and produced a terror tale of supreme art; from a memory stored with scenes from Gothic novels he selected the unusual and the bizarre; he used the themes and incidents suggested by Hoffmann, achieving by his artistry a more powerful effect and transforming what he borrowed into something that was his own.

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